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**The Portrayal of Economic and Political
Aspects of the Great Depression in America
Through Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath***

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Requirements for the Degree of Master**

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Abstract

The Grapes of Wrath is John Steinbeck's masterpiece that has proven its magnificence throughout the history of American literature. It is the authentic story of the Oklahoman families who had been evicted from their land and become migrant farmers in California. Thus, they experienced oppression by both the bourgeois and the government. This research requires the use of the Analytical Descriptive approach with the New Historicism theory since it shows the economic conditions that were reflected on many working class Americans during the Great Depression. Besides, it demonstrates how the American political system is reflected on characterization, plot, and symbols in the novel. *The Grapes of Wrath* is proved to be served as a mean that accurately depicted the Economic and Political aspects of the Great Depression in America.

Key Words

Great Depression, The Grapes of Wrath, Political Aspect, Economic Aspect

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Dedication

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Amroune Ikram.

Dedication

“Traveler, there is no path.

The path is made by walking”.

Antonio Machado.

Dedicated to the memory of my father "Omar", who always supported me, whatever path I took, a soft hearted man whom I still miss everyday.

This work is dedicated with love to my Mother "Nadjet", a strong and gentle soul who taught me to trust Allah, believe in hard work, and that so much could be done with little.

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Table of Contents

General Introduction.....	1
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Chapter One: America Before and During the Crash of 1929

1.1. Introduction.....	5
1.2. The Roaring 1920's of America.....	5
1.2.1. Economic Change during the Roaring 1920	5
1.2.2. Political Change during the Roaring 1920	7
1.3. America in the Great Depression.....	9
1.3.1.1. The Economic Situation of the Era.....	10
1.3.1.2. The Political Situation of the Era.....	12
1.4. Conclusion.....	15

Chapter Two: *The Grapes of Wrath*, a Formal Study

1. Introduction.....	16
2. Biography of John Steinbeck.....	16
2.2. The Grapes of Wrath (1939).....	16
2. 3 Main Characters in The Grapes of Wrath.....	18
3. The Summary of The Grapes of Wrath	19
4 Conclusion.....	23

Chapter Three: *The Grapes of Wrath*, a Mirror of Economic and Political aspects of the Great Depression in American

3.1. Introduction	24
3.2. Economy in the Grapes of Wrath.....	24
3.2.1. The Impact of the Bank's System	24
3.2.2. The Invasion of the Land by Machines	27
3.2.3. The Corrupted Business System.....	29
3.2.4. The Grandparents Death and the Bill.....	33
3.2.5. The Second Industrial Revolution	34

3.2.6 The Effects of the Capitalist System.....	35
3.2.7. Socialism in the Weedpatch Camp	37
3.2.8. Labor Issue and Low Wages	38
3.3. Politics in <i>The Grapes of Wrath</i>	42
3.3.1. The Abuse of Power	42
3.3.2. Mass Migration to California.....	44
3.3.3. Hoover Policy Vs Roosevelt Policy.....	45
3.3.4. The Farmers and the Discrimination Hardship.....	47
3.3.5. Child Labor	48
3.4. Conclusion	49

General Introduction

General Introduction

Although the United States had experienced several depressions before the stock market crash on October 27, 1929, however no one had been as long lasting before "Black Thursday" struck Wall Street triggering the Great Depression. A sharp drought hit the Western States led to the end of the Roaring Twenties, the time of economic prosperity and carefree living for many, replacing it with a decade of depression, despair, hardships and wrath. The Great Depression affected all aspects of society; the unemployment rate stood at an astonishing 25 percent, almost 13 million were out of work, most of them experienced poverty, starvation and homelessness. Wages for those who still had jobs fell 42 percent.

Farmers were the first social group to suffer hard by the crisis. On top of falling prices for crops, a devastating drought in Texas, Kansas, and Oklahoma brought on a series of dust storms known as the Dust Bowl. The dry land is no longer profitable, it is not producing enough crops to make money; therefore, the farmers have not been able to pay the landowners and their representatives for the land. Being under such hard circumstances, most of the farmers were evicted from their lands, as a result, they had to migrate to the westward to California searching for jobs.

The Great Depression was an era of hardships and despair, which pushed many authors to write about it among them "John Steinbeck", the famous American writer who won the Nobel prize in literature in 1962 for his impressive writings. The economic conditions in America during the Depression era influenced his writings to an extent that he devoted his Dustbowl Trilogy (*In Dubious Battle*, *Of Mice and Men* and *The Grapes of Wrath*) to the farmers and migrants' social and economic issues.

Among Steinbeck's Great Depression related works, *The Grapes of Wrath* that was one of the best American classics. When it was first published on Friday, April, 14th 1939, it attracted wide critical acclaim.

Steinbeck captures the poverty, desperation and social injustice experienced by many working class in America during the Great Depression. *The Grapes of Wrath* has a special focus on the Oklahoman farmers including the Joad family who were forced to leave their land, to leave where they born because of the draught that hit most of Oklahoma, and permeated everything it touched including the crops, that is why the tenant farmers have not been able to pay the landowners and their representatives for the land, so the bank took the land back from the farmers, as a result, the Joad family and other Oklahoman farmers were obliged to leave everything, to leave their land, their jobs and their homes, and to move to the westward to California looking for jobs, and for

better life conditions. Steinbeck's enduring success of his book and its wide achievement was not the result of only describing particular issues centered on the migrant people in California, but in a more general way it depicts the oppressive economic and political system during the Great Depression, and examines how this system affected all life aspects of working-class Americans.

The present thesis brings out the following main question:

How the Economy and Political Aspects of the Great Depression in America are portrayed in Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* ?

With other sub Research questions:

Was Steinbeck able to depict the Economic and Political Aspects of the Great Depression through his novel?

What are the Economic and Political factors of the Great Depression?

There are multiple reasons behind choosing this topic "The Portrayal of Economic and Political Aspects of the Great Depression in America through Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*". First, The Significance of this study is to show the political and the economic aspects that contributed if not led to all kinds of social injustice experienced by the working class in the United States. Second, most of the previous researchers have focused on the social side of *The Grapes of Wrath*, focusing less on the importance of both economic and political angles on all what happened during the Depression time such as: "The American Society During the Great Depression in John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*", a thesis written by Merada Mohamed, another example is " The American Society during the Economic Crisis in John Steinbeck's "*The Grapes of Wrath*" written by Dorbane Abdeldjalil, Mahoub Yehya, Laadjel Mohamed and Hedjouli Yacine.

These two theses tackled basically the social side only of the Great Depression that is portrayed in John Steinbeck's novel '*The Grapes of Wrath*'

Studying an issue on the United States history requires the use of the analytical descriptive approach. First, studying any literary work requires the use of the descriptive approach. Second, examining the economic and political aspects of the Great Depression in the novel requires the analytical approach. Finally, since the novel's theme is related to history, which is the Great Depression in America, so there is necessary to use the New Historicism theory.

The research gathered in the course of the present thesis is a combination of books, articles, historical documents and websites.

This thesis contains three chapters. Chapter one is : "America Before and During the Crash of 1929 " starts with a historical background of the Roaring 1920's, focuses on economic and political change during the decade, moving to the Depression Era, this part of the first chapter focuses on the economic and political factors of the depression time.

"*The Grapes of Wrath: a Formal Study.*" Is the second chapter of the thesis in which there is a biography of the writer, John Steinbeck and a summary of the novel ‘ ‘ *The Grapes of Wrath* ’, ’ with its major characters.

The final chapter is "*The Grapes of Wrath*; a Mirror of the Economic and Political aspects of the Great Depression in America, First it discusses the economic angle of the Great Depression that is portrayed in the novel such as: the Impact of the bank's system, The invasion of the land by machines, the corrupted business system, the grandparents death and the bill, the Second Industrial Revolution, the effects of the Capitalist system., socialism in the Weedpatch camp, and finally labor issue and low wages.

The second part of the third chapter discusses the political side of the Great Depression in America, that is depicted the story such as: the abuse of power, mass migration to California, Hoover policy Vs Roosevelt policy, farmers and the discrimination and finally child labor.

This chapter demonstrates of the economic and political system, specifically the effects of the corrupted government and oppressive banks on Americans in general and on farmers in particular.

Chapter One

America Before and During the Crash of 1929

1. Introduction

After the world war one, peace settled in America, bringing luxury and comfort to all American citizens. This period of time was known as The Roaring Twenties of America, and it was characterized by the appearance of the new innovations and technological *developments that contributed in the economic growth of the United States. However this period of prosperity did not last forever, it was ended by the Stock Market Crash of October 1929, announcing The Great Depression era.*

1.2. The Roaring 1920s of America

The period from 1920-1929 is called the ‘Roaring Twenties’. This era witnessed an economic boom that had a great impact on Americans since incomes and living standards rose for most of them. Moreover, a lot of new innovations and technological developments came into existence during this period of time such as Automobile, radio and talking motion pictures providing Americans with new forms of comfort and entertainment (Bailey et al 729).

1.2.1. Economic Change during the Roaring 1920s

In this decade, America became the richest nation on Earth, therefore, a tide of economic change swept across the country.

The First World War devastated most of Europe. Therefore, America was the producer of half of the world's output, as a result The economy grew 42 percent during the 1920s, besides, the New construction increased from \$6.7 billion to \$10.1 billion. Moreover, Unemployment had never been more than 4 percent, which is a very natural rate. In addition to all of that, the average income of each person also rose from \$6,460 to \$8,016 (Amadeo).

The American economy's phenomenal growth rate during the twenties was led by the automobile industry. The number of cars on the road almost tripled between 1920 and 1929 thanks to the assembly line¹ in manufacturing. The best example of this is Henry Ford's "T model"². Reducing the cost of Automobiles to \$260 allowed average American citizens to purchase cars for the first time; nearly each home has one car. In 1929, there was one car on the road for every 4.9 Americans. (Bailey et al 741).

The Automobile had a great impact on the economy of The United States; a new industry appeared based on steel, as a result, six million people could have jobs by 1930. Therefore, it was the main reason behind the country's prosperity as stated by Bailey et al:

it was a major wellspring of the nation's prosperity. Thousands of new jobs, moreover, were created by supporting industries. The lengthening list would include rubber, glass, and fabrics, to say nothing of highway construction and thousands of service stations and garages. America's standard of living, responding to this infectious vitality, rose to an enviable level (742).

Meanwhile, an economy of automobiles was born, Governments spent \$1 billion to build new roads, traffic lights, garages, restaurant and motels sprang up to meet drivers'

¹A line of workers and, machines in a factory, along which a product passes, having parts made, put together or checked at each stage.

²The first car produced on an assembly line in America and, sold at a price that ordinary people could afford.

needs. Both vehicles and their owners were protected by the insurance industry, but not for free. Banks also benefited from this invention by lending to new car owners (Amadeo).

A lifelong resident of Muncie, Indiana, disguised as “Middletown” in Robert and Helen Lynd’s exhaustive investigation of American life in a typical medium-size community during the 1920s, pooh-poohed their scientific sociological methods: “Why on earth do you need to study what’s changing this country? I can tell you what’s happening in just four letters: A-U-T-O!”(qtd In Bailey et al 742).

However, not all Americans could take part equally in leisure and prosperity; farmers did not benefit from this economic growth, because Farming declined from 18 percent to 12.4 percent of the economy, and farm income fell 21 percent. By 1929, in the other hand taxes increased into 40 percent per acre, while the average annual income for famers was only \$273 (Amadeo).

1.2.2 Political Change during the Roaring 1920s

During the twenties age, people from different parts of the world began to flood into the US, where they were not welcomed. The US was against the unrestricted immigration that brought about 800,000 newcomers to the country in 1920–1921. Therefore, the Congress enacted several restrictive immigration laws to prevent foreigners from entering the country, these immigration quotas would change over the years. The Immigration Act of 1924 lowered the quota from three to two percent of the foreign-born population. The national- origins base was pushed back the year on which quota calculations were based from 1910 to 1890. The most basic purpose of the 1924 Immigration Act was to preserve the ideal of U.S. homogeneity, and it was revised again by the Congress in 1952 (Bailey et al 732).

Before the First World War, young women in the lower classes were working “in service” – as maids for the wealthier classes, while upper class young women were working

in an office and social work, teaching, nursing, and apparel manufacturing. However, men and women have been treated unequally, even with more women in the workplace; no progress was made on issues such as job discrimination or equal pay. But, during the war, women were obliged to enter the workforce to replace men fighting overseas. By the end of the war, women were expected to return to their traditional roles as housewives, and mothers, however; they stayed in the work force. Women in the work force spoke up about working conditions and health care and that paved the way for suffrage (Saupe1).

The 1920s proved to be a shifting decade for women's rights. Women, From the United States, to Great Britain, to other parts of the world fought for equal rights in all aspects of life, on the top of them Elizabeth Cady Stanton who was the organizations first president of the National American Women's Suffrage Association. She was one of the most well known women in the 20s, because she believed and worked for a better future for women. She drafted a Declaration of Sentiments that included the demand of women's right to vote, this demand was based on the Declaration of Independence (Saupe 2).

In 1893, women had the right to vote in Colorado, followed by Utah 1896, Idaho 1896, Washington 1910, California 1911, Arizona 1912, Kansas 1912, Oregon 1912, Illinois 1913, and Nevada and Montana 1914 Finally, on August 26th, 1920, Women's Rights was made the 19th amendment to the U.S. Constitution The modern call for American women's suffrage began in the mid-nineteenth century with the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention Beginning in 1870, their National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) presented a resolution to Congress each year called the Susan B. Anthony Amendment to allow women's suffrage (Bonansea).

The previous quote shows the long way that women all over the world had to go through in order to gain the right to vote.

1.3 America in the Great Depression

The Great Depression was a worldwide economic downturn, it was so severe and lasted so long that many people thought it was the end of the American Dream, sparking fundamental changes in economic institutions, and politics.

The Great depression was an economic crisis that happened in 1929, known as the biggest economic crisis in the world. According to Zinn “The stock market crash of 1929 ,which marked the beginning of the Great Depression of the United states, come directly from wild speculation which collapsed and brought the whole economy down with it” (361).

The stock market crash of October 24th, 1929, which is known as “The black Thursday” occurred at the beginning of the Great Depression, whether it was a symptom of the impending depression or a direct cause of it, it is still hotly debated, stock prices plummeted. People lost their entire savings; numerous companies were ruined, faith in banks was destroyed and panic spread all over the country: “worldwide economic downturn that began in 1929 and lasted about 1939. it was the longest and most severe depression ever experienced by the industrialized western world, sparking fundamental changes in economic institutions, macroeconomic policy, and economic theory” (Pells and Romer).

The Great depression started in America, but it affected almost every country in the world. This trauma shaped the 1930's life aspects of America; it had huge effects and hit the American's society in a harsh way, causing many problems and disasters. It was and still the worst economic crisis in the American history.

1.3.1. The Economic Situation of the Era

During the 1920s, United States economy expanded, a period dubbed “The roaring twenties”. The stock market in New York City was a place where everyone from billionaires to poor people saved their money into stocks and it reached its peak in August 1929. People become greedy with time for the easy money, by buying and selling shares. Many people borrowed money from banks to buy stocks. With the mood of the country exuberant, the stock market seemed an infallible investment in the future; it was a kind of fever spread all over the country (O'Callaghan 96).

The stock market crash hit the country, stock market prices plummeted, people got panic and were terrified by this trauma. O'Callaghan states in his book on the beginning of the panic attack: “A panic began. On Thursday, October 24, 1929-black Thursday -13 million shares were sold” (79). Most of people found themselves in a huge debt. This collapse was known as the Wall Street Crash and considered as the first sign of the Great depression and its first cause.

After 1933 the nation's gross national product decreased into the half .Cravens provides more detailed facts in his book:

The extent of the Great Depression of the United States can be expressed in numbers. The nation's gross national product (GNP) ---a measure of the total value of the economy---was \$104.4 billion before the crash in 1929. By 1933 it had shrunk to \$74.2 billion (expressed in 1929 prices). The GNP per capita in those same years plummeted from \$857 to \$590. The later being lower than in the years 1907-1911, so that the economic growth since 1911 suddenly disappeared (12).

People panicked after the failure of many banks, in which they saved their money and lost their life savings. Thomas gives extra numerical information in his book about the three first years:

Between 1929 and 1932, the national income dropped from over \$82 billion to \$40 billion. Corporate profits plummeted; by 1932 369,000 companies reported deficits. Industrial production declined by 48 percent. Industrial construction dropped from \$949 million to \$74 million. Five thousand banks went under in three years, wiping out nine million savings accounts (12).

Those savings or losses were very important in shaping the economic system; this later was deeply affected by several reasons.

A general nationwide loss of confidence in the economy, reduced the levels of spending and demand therefore of production. Factories started to fire their workers and wages fell, buying power decreased rising numbers of homeless people because they could not pay the rent. The unemployment rate rose, which meant even less spending to help alleviate the economic situation (O'Callaghan 96-97).

The economic downturn had huge effects on all people across the country, Zinn states in his book: "There were millions of tons of food around, but it was not profitable to transport it, to sell it. Warehouses were full of clothing, but people could not afford it, there were a lot of houses, but they stayed empty, because people couldn't pay the rent" (362). The huge impact of the Great Depression on the financial situation of all people across the country

People at that time could not purchase luxury goods anymore such as automobiles; this decreasing number in buying cars affected the car industry as mentioned by Young and K. Young: "Out of 60 American companies manufacturing a significant number of cars in 1930, only 18 remained in production at the end of the decade" (34).

During the Presidency of Roosevelt, after he launched a series of programs to save the economy and the capitalist system, the situation started to seem better especially when the unemployment rate dropped in 1935, but soon the economy declined again in 1938, as Reed

states “Freed from the worst of the New Deal, the economy showed some signs of life. Unemployment dropped to 18 percent in 1935, 14 percent in 1936, and even lower in 1937. But by 1938, it was back up to 20 percent as the economy slumped again. The stock market crashed nearly 50 percent between August 1929 and March 1930”.

1.3.2. The Political Situation of the Era

During the Depression era, Herbert Hoover ruled from 1919 to 1933. The president Hoover thought that the Great Depression was only a hitch, and that the economic downturn of the country will disappear soon. During his presidency, he showed less care for people and especially for the working class, he believed in the Rugged Individualism, and that people should count on themselves and do not rely on others or even on the government, he was against helping the public and believed that the government should not interfere in people's affairs. During his rule he opposed any kind of work projects that require the government funds, also his government adopted ‘laissez- faire³’ policies during his domination (Uehr).

President Hoover enforced the Policy “Hawley Smoot tariff⁴” to increase US farmer protection against agricultural imports because the American farmers struggled with the declining prices and over production. He believed that it was beneficial for the economy, the effects of the act led the administration to become nationalistic and isolationist. It virtually closed the borders to foreign goods .Reeves states in his book “In the hope of protecting farmers from overseas competition, the president signed the Hawley Smoot Act of 1930, which drastically raised the tariff” (102).

³ The idea that governments and the law should not interfere with business, finance, or the conditions of people's working lives.

⁴ an act implementing protectionist trade policies sponsored by Senator Reed Smoot and Representative Willis C. Hawley and was signed into law on June 17, 1930. The act raised U.S. tariffs on over 20,000 imported goods.

The election of the American presidency took place in 1932, the president Herbert Hoover was running for a second term presented as a republican candidate, in his campaigns he assured that his policies prevented the Great Depression from being worse than it was. In the other hand, there were the democrats who nominated Franklin Roosevelt and during his elections, his wife Eleanor was his political partner became the most active First lady ever. Most of Roosevelt's speeches were written by a group of intellectuals called the brain trust, he featured an attack on Hoover's spending, with the transition in the black's votes from the republicans to the Democratic Party, and he could win the elections and defeated Herbert Hoover 472 to 59 (Bailey et al 777,778-779).

From civil war to the Great Depression, the dominant force was the Republican Party, but after the election of Roosevelt, the political power went to the Democratic Party. President Franklin Roosevelt took office in 1933, during the next 8 years; the government launched a series of programs and projects trying to enhance the economy, and to regain measure of prosperity to the Americans. Zinn describes the situation, he says:

The Roosevelt reforms went far beyond previous legislation. They had to meet two pressing needs: to reorganize capitalism in such a way to overcome the crisis and stabilize the system; also, to head off the alarming growth of spontaneous rebellion in the early years of the Roosevelt administration-organization of tenants and the unemployed, movements of self-help, general strikes in several cities (366).

Roosevelt's programs were called the New Deal because some of the ideas have never been tried in the country before. Roosevelt started quickly trying new laws and programs, he changed people who were in charge in the government and pointed people who had potentials no matter their background. He started with banks, closed all the banks for

one day, and went off the gold standard⁵, which helped the economy. In 1933, there were almost 14 million people jobless, so the president established the Civilian Conservation Corps⁶ (CCC), which provided jobs for people from age 18 to 25 who were not in schools. And so many other programs were established in order to improve the situation, but there were too many difficulties during the race. The most enduring nicknames of the era was The Dirty Thirties (Lusted 38,39,40,43-44).

President Roosevelt believed in the structure of the American capitalism and tried to save it, the economic state of the country was desperate, so he introduced those several programs hoping to provide relief, jobs and reenergize the capitalist system. His programs included Agriculture; in order to save this domain he introduced several kinds of programs, for example: the Farm security Administration, which was created in order to improve the farmers' life conditions and gave the farmers the authority to purchase farms. This Association helped migrant workers who suffered from starvation and homelessness by building modern government camps (Leuchtenburg).

Roosevelt had a good speaking skill, and self confidence, he showed so much care about the working class, and tried his possible to help poor people, he was a "people person", and enjoyed meeting people. He was very popular; people loved him because he could deal with the main problems such as hunger and joblessness. He managed in his first days of rule to pass a numerous policies to solve issues of the Great Depression and to respond the public needs; he could maintain the support of the working class quickly because they felt that Roosevelt cared about them and gave them a special interest (Uehr).

⁵ The system, abandoned in the Depression of the 1930s, by which the value of a currency was defined in terms of gold, for which the currency could be exchanged.

⁶a public work relief program that operated from 1933 to 1942 in the United States for unemployed, unmarried men. Originally for young men ages 18–25, it was eventually expanded to ages 17–28

1.4. Conclusion

The Great depression was the worst economic downturn in the history of the industrialized world. It was an era full of huge problems such as damaged economy, banking system failure, joblessness, poverty, death and suicide. Like historical accounts, John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* depicts the American society during that period through a description of economy, government, people and landscape.

Chapter Two

***The Grapes of Wrath;* a Formal Study**

2.1. Introduction

John Ernest Steinbeck a famous American writer, who has a great contribution in the history of the American literature, known for his Dust Bowl trilogy. John wrote sixteen novels and many other works, he won the Pulitzer Prize for his masterpiece *The Grapes of Wrath* and was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1962.

2.2. Biography of John Steinbeck

John Ernest Steinbeck was born on February 27, 1902 in Salinas California, he was the third of four children, he started writing at the age of sixteen. In 1936, John went to see the poor migrant farmers who were camping in California, this experience had major effects in his career, he wrote seven news articles concerning the Dust Bowl families, but he decided that he must write a book about it, this turned on writing his famous masterpiece *The Grapes of Wrath* publishing it in 1938. The book was an instant sensation but controversial at the same time, publicizing the struggles of the migrant farmers, people accused him as being a communist. Steinbeck was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1962 (Reef 9-6-4-1).

2.3 *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939)

John Steinbeck during his youth, worked on a sugar beet farms with migrants, where he was deeply touched by the awful treatment and injustice that the migrants have lived in back then. This experience inspired him to write his master piece *The Grapes of Wrath* which was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for fiction and the National Book Award. Moreover, it was

adapted as a movie in 1940 and as a play in 1988 by Frank Galati (*The Grapes of Wrath* Adapted by Frank Galati).

The Grapes of Wrath was written in 1983, and published in 1939, a novel that talks about a family that suffered from the Great Depression, so they migrated to California looking for farming jobs to get their sustenance. It is one of the most famous novels in the American literature, fifteen million copies of the book have been sold with another 150,000 being added annually, and it was translated into many languages (Heasley).

His first wife helped him in choosing the title, which comes directly from the song of Julia Howe "*The Battle Hymn of the Republic*" in 1861:

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord;
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;
He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword;
His truth is marching on (*Garner*).

Steinbeck's title is mentioned in his book: Watch the mountains of oranges slop down to putrefying ooze; and in the eyes of the people there is the failure; and in the eyes of the hungry there is a growing wrath. In the souls of the people *The Grapes of Wrath* are filling and growing heavy, growing heavy for the vintage'' (Steinbeck 238) Here, in chapter twenty five, people got angry and frustrated because of the high prices and filled with wrath.

The title of the novel is odd because it is an oxymoron, which combines two contradicted terms. "Grapes" which are a sweet fruit, and "wrath" which means an extreme which comes from "bitter." Steinbeck liked the title because it was a march and thought that his novel is revolutionary.

The novel despite its success, received many critical reviews, it was burned and banned in towns across America. The Associated Farmers rejected the novel claiming that Steinbeck is a communist and the novel is a communist propaganda and full with lies. The book was banned in many libraries in the country, and was banned in the Soviet Union by

Joseph Stalin because the Communist party was terrified by the idea that poor people in America could buy cars during the economic downturn. It was burned in towns across America (Chilton).

2.3.1 Main characters in *The Grapes of Wrath*

Tom Joad: The central character of the novel and second Joad son. As the novel opens, he is recently returning home to his family after his parole from the McAlester State Penitentiary. Tom is good-natured, thoughtful and direct man.

Ma Joad: The mother of Noah, Tom, Rose of Sharon, Ruthie and Winfield. Ma Joad is introduced as a strong-minded and resolute woman. Her main concern is that the family remains united.

Pa Joad: Ma Joad's husband and Tom's father. Pa Joad is an Oklahoman farmer who lost his land because of his debt, and decided to lead his family to California in search for work.

Rose of Sharon: The oldest of Ma and Pa Joad's daughters, and Connie's wife. She is petulant, and romantic young woman and self-absorbed by her pregnancy, Rose of Sharon is the one adult who retains a sense of optimism in the future. She dreams of a better life with her husband and her first child, but becomes paranoid once her husband leaves her in California.

Granma and Granpa: The couple who first began farming on the land that Pa has lost.

Reverend Jim Casy: A former preacher who gave up his ministry out of a belief that all human experience is holy. After time in jail, he becomes involved with labor activities. Casy is a martyr for his beliefs, murdered in a confrontation with police.

2.3.2 The Summary of *The Grapes of Wrath*

The writer opens his novel with a description of the destroyed crops caused by dust storms, after a long time with no rain to the red and gray country of Oklahoma. ***“TO THE RED COUNTRY and part of the gray country of Oklahoma, the last rains came gently, and they did not cut the scarred earth. The plows crossed and recrossed the rivulet marks”*** (Steinbeck 1). The last rains lifted the corn quickly and scattered weed colonies and grass along the sides of the roads so that the gray country and the dark red country began to disappear under a green cover. Women are waiting for the reaction of their men if they are going to break. However, men do not. Instead, they search for a solution to the ruined corn. The description of the dehydrated land continues until the appearance of Tom Joad, who is released from jail after four years for a murder charge, he arrives to a roadside diner and asks a truck driver for a ride, and he accepts after a small chat.

Tom arrives to his destination and walks on the dirt, and meets Jim Casy on his way heading home, Casy was a preacher who gave up his calling. They go together to Tom's house to see his family, but he finds it deserted, Tom is worried about his family, then a neighbor tells him that they have been tracted off their land and they are living with Tom's uncle John and about to go to California like the majority of the Oklahoman families.

Poor farmers have to sell their household goods to buy vehicles in order to travel to the west. The salesmen are exploiting the desperate farmers and sell old pieces with high prices. But, the tenants have no other choice than to take what is offered.

Next morning, Tom and Casy set out to Uncle John's house and find Ma and Pa Joad packing up the family's belongings. The family is very happy and surprised to see Tom, Rose of Sharon his younger sister is now married and in the early stages of pregnancy, they gather to eat breakfast, Casy says grace over the meal after explaining that he is no longer a

preacher. Tom wants to go with his family, despite the fact that he is a prison parolee and restricted in Oklahoma's borders.

The journey to California starts, the Joads face some problems with their rickety used truck along Route 66, "**HIGHWAY 66 IS THE** main migrant road. 66—the long concrete path across the country, waving gently up and down on the map, from the Mississippi to Bakersfield—over the red lands and the gray lands, twisting up into the mountains, crossing the Divide and down into the bright and terrible desert, and across the desert to the mountains again, and into the rich California valleys"(Steinbeck 78). Thousands of people travel the highway, running away from the harsh and difficult economic and environmental conditions caused by the Dust Bowl, and looking for a new hope to a brighter future,. The family stops at night and meets the Wilson's, a couple from Kansas, Grandpa has a stroke and dies, the Joads cannot report his death because they will have to pay forty dollars to bury him so they do it by their own.

Tom and Al fix the Wilsons car, and the two families travel together, after two days they settle in a camp where a lot of stories are told about the working conditions in California, one man tells his sad story that there is no work there, and that his wife and children starved to death. Masses of cars travel together and camp along the highway; they are no longer farmers but "migrants men" who create their own communities shaped by their rules and social expectations.

Grandma is so sick, and the Joads are afraid from what is coming next, after hearing so many bad rumors about California, but they continue their trip through the desert leaving the Wilsons behind. Through the road agricultural inspectors want to inspect the truck but Ma begs and tells them that Grandma is so ill and must go to the doctor urgently and they accept.

As the truck stops into Tehachapi, the beauty of the valley amazes the Joads. Ma tells them that Grandma has been dead before the agricultural inspectors stopped them, and that she could do nothing because the family had to get across the desert; the family is terrified by

the strength of Ma. The writer describes how California once upon a time belonged to Mexico, and was taken away by hungry American squatters, who developed farms only to make a profit, and farming became industry, those pioneers who owned lands hired the Chinese, Japanese, Mexicans, and Filipinos for low wages, and a disrespectful treatment.

When the Dust hits the country, thousands of people travel to California, they are hungry, and all their intention is to work and get food. They live in camps in Hooverilles, migrants see their children starving, they know how to grow food, but they could not do it on the land of the owners, because they will be kicked out, they are unwelcomed, everyone there is calling them "The Okies".

Migrant workers and their children are starving, the terrible circumstances "they are in" changed them, being replaced by the machines, the fear is in everyone's eyes. Although the food prices are the same but wages are very low, the landowners grow rich, they drive these desperate folks out of work leaving them with an empty stomach but they do not know that "the line between hunger and anger is a thin line" (Steinbeck 194).

The Joads do not have enough money for a proper funeral for Grandma, so they live her body in a coroner's office, and they camp in Hooverilles, a dirty camp full of joblessness and hungry people. Tom and AL meet a man named Floyd, who tells them that there are no jobs at all in the area. While men are sitting in the camp a contractor comes, and asks them if they want to work. An argument between Floyd and the contractor starts, and the man calls a police deputy but Floyd runs away and Tom hits the deputy, Casy acts quickly and hits the policeman, he asks Tom to leave the scene and willingly gets in the police car. The Joads leave the camp after hearing the rumor that it will be burned at night.

The family arrives at a government camp called Weedpatch, a very nice camp with showers and dances every Saturday nights. The Joads see this place as a slice of heaven, especially when Tom finds a job in pipe laying, and that is what makes him feel so happy. He

knows from the owner he is working for that the Farmer Association will create troubles on the dance night, to give the policemen a reason to close the camp. Meanwhile, Rose of Sharon meets a woman who tells her to stay away from dancing and singing that goes in the camp and warns that the babies of sinner born “dead and bloody”, she freaks out. Pa, Uncle John and Al return home after a fruitless day of looking for jobs.

Those migrants workers who have been thrown together by horrible circumstances, search for pleasure to ease their minds and escape from the awful reality they live in, they get drunk to deaden the pain of their situation, some gather to tell stories, to dance and to listen to music.

After spending a month in Weedpatch, the family moves to Hooper Ranch where they work in picking peaches. Tom meets Jim Casy who has been in jail, and tells him stories about it, and how it can be powerful when oppressed fellows get together, and fight their oppressors. He also tells him that they are running a strike, during their discussion, a group of men with weapons and flashlights start chasing them, one of them kills Casy, and Tom avenges his death and kills his murderer, then he runs away back to the peach camp.

Toms wants to leave his family to keep them out of troubles, but Ma tells him that they will leave the place, and they will go to a cotton field northwards. The family arrive there and could get one of the boxcars to stay in, they are well paid and could buy meat and new clothes. Toms is hiding in a close place where Ma takes food to him every day, until Winfield tells other children about him and spills the Tom beans. Ma rushes to tell Tom about it so, he decides to leave the family, because he wants to help the workers and continue Casy’s dream.

The family works on picking cotton, Rose of Sharon insists to work although she is sick and in her last stages of pregnancy, rain days came and that means no work for the

farmers and no food, women watch their men fearing that will finally break but however the men's fear turn to anger, men are full with wrath.

The story is about to end. The land floods because of the rain, the workers are helpless and weakened by hunger, a lot of them resort to robbery and begging; Rose of Sharon is on labor, and gives birth to a dead baby, water has climbed up to the boxcars, so Pa, Ma, Al, Rose of Sharon and Winfield go to a dry place, a barn where they find a little boy and an old man who is starving to death, the old man has not eaten anything since the last six days so, Rose of Sharon decides to breastfeed the starving man, with a mysterious smile upon her lips" Ma leaned forward and with her palm she brushed the tousled hair back from her daughter's forehead, and she kissed her on the forehead. Ma got up quickly. *"Come on, you fellas," she called. "You come out in the tool shed."* Ruthie opened her mouth to speak. *"Hush," Ma said. "Hush and git."* She herded them through the door, drew the boy with her; and she closed the squeaking door"(Steinbeck 313).

2.4. Conclusion

John Steinbeck's journey helped him in his writing, working while studying and observing the workers conditions and sufferance influenced his style, he had a sympathetic feeling towards the working layer. *The Grapes of Wrath*, was quickly made into a famed, a novel that reflects the hardships of the migrant families and represents a vivid picture of oppression and misery. It was noted for Steinbeck's passionate depiction of the plight of the poor, and at once became a national sensation, possibly the most reviewed and publicized and even the most controversial American novel of the 20th century.

Chapter Three

The Grapes of Wrath, **a Mirror of the Economic and Political aspects of the Great Depression in America**

3.1 Introduction

John Steinbeck in his masterpiece "*The Grapes of Wrath*" captures vividly what it was like to live through the Great Depression. Although his novel focuses on the desperation, poverty, and social injustice experienced by many working-class Americans during the bleak period in American national history, which is the central issue in *The Grapes of Wrath*. Steinbeck also tries to depict and criticize the political and the economic systems of the country that led to the undergoing of the American society.

3.2 Economy in *the Grapes of Wrath*

John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, published in 1939, describes a dark time in American history that reflected on the story of the Joad family and other Oklahoman farmers. The historical context of *The Grapes of Wrath* is the Great Depression; it was the worst economic downturn in American history. Therefore, the novel represents numerous aspects of economy during the time era.

3.2.1. The Impact of The Bank's system

The Grapes of Wrath takes place in 1933 when the Great Depression hit America. During this time, drought and severe dust storms affected large parts of the American Midwest, including much of the state of Oklahoma, creating what was called the Dust Bowl. This is where the Joad family was living, experiencing poverty and desperation. The narrator

of the *Grapes of wrath* says: “Every moving thing lifted the dust into the air: a walking man lifted a thin layer as high as his waist, and a wagon lifted the dust as high as the fence tops, and an automobile boiled a cloud behind it. The dust was long in settling back again” (Steinbeck 3).

The dust permeated everything it touched including the crops. The dry land is not producing enough crops to make money; therefore, the tenant farmers have not been able to pay the landowners and their representatives for the land, so the owner men kicked the tenant farmers off their houses and their land. The Oklahoman farmers argue that the land belongs to them because their families have lived and died on it, but the men representing the company come to tell the farmers that the land is no longer profitable because of the drought: “*You know the land’s getting poorer. You know what cotton does to the land; robs it, sucks all the blood out of it*” (Steinbeck 22). Trying to shift the blame away from themselves, and putting it on the banks, the men representing the country say that the banks are taking the land back because of the draught.

Steinbeck carefully wove many economic themes throughout the novel, but Marxism theme is by far one of the most common themes through which to read the novel. This is because Steinbeck's narrative represents the problems a capitalist society creates for working class people. Marxism is an economic and social system based upon the political and economic theories of the German philosopher, Karl Marx, who believed that society, should live for the good of all, not the individual.

Marx's theories are based more on economics than politics. He explains how class conflict is created and economic disparity increases between those who have “bourgeoisie” and those who do not “proletariat” (Chambre and McLellan). These two groups are portrayed by Steinbeck through the characters of his novel ‘*The Grapes of Wrath*’. The bank’s envoys

are seen as the bourgeoisie, while the Oklahoman farmers including the Joads are seen as the Proletariat.

The bank was the main reason behind the homelessness and the joblessness of the Oklahoman farmers; forcing them to leave where they were born, to leave their homes, their land and their jobs. To depict the insatiability of the bank for money, Steinbeck creates a strong metaphor that reflects their inhumanity and injustice, he describes them as Monsters:

If a bank or a finance company owned the land, the owner man said, The Bank—or the Company— needs—wants—insists—must have—as though the Bank or the Company were a monster, with thought and feeling, which had ensnared them. These last would take no responsibility for the banks or the companies because they were men and slaves, while the banks were machines and masters all at the same time (Steinbeck 21).

The Great Depression was a time when the worst economic downturn in the history haunted America for a decade, leaving more than twelve million Americans jobless and hungry. It stands to reason that Steinbeck would take issue with the banks. Steinbeck depicts banks as monsters, because he sees them as an evil, which feeds on the misfortune of farmers and land owners. The landowners try to explain that the banks do not breathe air or eat food like humans, they eat profits, and without profits, they will starve to death.

A man can hold land if he can just eat and pay taxes; he can do that. Yes, he can do that until his crops fail one day and he has to borrow money from the bank. But—you see, a bank or a company can't do that, because those creatures don't breathe air, don't eat side-meat. They breathe profits; they eat the interest on money. If they don't get it, they die the way you die without air, without side-meat. It is a sad thing, but it is so. It is just so (Steinbeck22).

The Oklahoman farmers try to argue and to convince the landowners that maybe next year things will get better, but the owner men insist that “*The bank—the monster has to have*

profits all the time. It can't wait. It'll die. No, taxes go on. When the monster stops growing, it dies. It can't stay one size" (22).

All this monster talk makes the reader feel like he is reading *Frankenstein* for Mary Shelley instead of *The Grapes of Wrath*. The monster has power over the people who built it, it's out of control. *"The bank is something more than men, I tell you. It's the monster. Men made it, but they can't control it"* (24).

3.2.2. The Invasion of the Land by Machines

The tenant farmers including the Joad family are obliged to leave Oklahoma because they get into a lot of debt that they cannot pay; so they have been kicked out of their land, in which they have been farming and working on it for generations. The bank monster is replacing farmers with machines, a single man on a tractor to do the same work as fourteen families. The bank is hungry for money, just as the tenant farmers are hungry for food. The owner men add: *"The tenant system won't work anymore. One man on a tractor can take the place of twelve or fourteen families. Pay him a wage and take all the crop. We have to do it. We don't like to do it. But the monster's sick. Something's happened to the monster"* (22).

The farmers try desperately to explain that the land actually belongs to them, and the debt does not allow the bank to take it away from them *"It's our land. We measured it and broke it up. We were born on it, and we got killed on it, died on it. Even if it's no good, it's still ours. That's what makes it ours—being born on it, working it, dying on it. That makes ownership, not a paper with numbers on it"* (Steinbeck 24).

It did not take so much time for the tractors to come over the roads and into the fields, to announce the birth of a new way of life, where the men and farmers are no longer useful. Tractors invade the land, destroying all human elements in its path and plowing the soil in

preparation for the cotton crops. Steinbeck describes how the tractors drivers are also like machines. *"The man sitting in the iron seat did not look like a man; gloved, goggled, rubber dust mask over nose and mouth, he was a part of the monster, a robot in the seat"* (24). When the driver climbs on the tractor, he becomes heartless and linked only to his goal of gaining individual profit, and does not care about the soil, or how his actions affect the land and the farmers.

When a tenant asks one of the tractors' drivers, how he can do this kind of job? How he can accept to take this job when it means destroying not only an entire family, but a lot of families, the tractor driver tells him *"Three dollars a day. I got damn sick of creeping for my dinner—and not getting it. I got a wife and kids. We got to eat. Three dollars a day, and it comes every day."* (25). The Oklahoman farmers get angry, and cannot stop thinking of how could anyone betray a whole community to look out for his own best interests, and ask again who is the responsible for all of this, and threatens to kill him "the tenant said. *"Who gave you orders? I'll go after him. He's the one to kill."* (26). The drivers say that the bank monster is behind all of this, however they proclaim that they never get to see the faces of the bank's agents; they never meet a specific landowner or a banker. They just know that they exist and, they are hungry for money, and then the tractor men simply continue to say *"Fellow was telling me the bank gets orders from the East. The orders were, 'Make the land show profit or we'll close you up'"* (26).

The farmers are going through the most difficult period of their lives; the dust bowl has made living in Oklahoma very hard, if not impossible. The bank kicked the farmers off their land, and made them homeless, while the industrialization that brought new inventions such as tractors caused the farmers to lose their jobs.

3.2.3. **The Corrupted Business System**

The Grapes of Wrath has a very specific focus on the situation of the farmers during the Depression time, and their struggles against the bourgeoisie. The land owners suggest that the tenant farmers move to the west to California, where there are tons of jobs there, since they already lost everything in Oklahoma, and there is nothing left to do there. The tenants agreed to leave especially when they saw the handbill demanding farmers to do the picking job.

The Joad family and the rest of the Oklahoman farmers need to purchase a car for their trek to California; they get to deal with tricky tactics of the used car dealership owners. The used car salesmen are doing business at a brisk pace, they use every trick they can to make people spend their last dime on an old broken down car or truck at hugely inflated prices, and most of the time they succeed in doing so. The salesmen declare:

Listen, Jim, I heard that Chevvy's rear end. Sounds like bustin' bottles. Squirt in a couple quarts of sawdust. Put some in the gears, too. We got to move that lemon for thirty-five dollars. Bastard cheated me on that one. I offer ten an' he jerks me to fifteen, an' then the son-of-a-bitch took the tools out. God Almighty! I wisht I had five hundred jalopies. This ain't gonna last. He don't like the tires? Tell 'im they got ten thousand in'em (Steinbeck 42).

The previous quote from chapter seven explains how the salesmen aim to capitalize on the tenants' desperation and naiveté by pouring sawdust into the engine to cover up the noises, and replacing good batteries with cracked ones before they finally deliver the

jalopies⁷. The tenants realize they're being taken advantage of, but unfortunately, they have no other choice than to take what is offered.

This chapter critiques another part of the business system. The used car salesmen have a complete control, they look at their customers, they knew that the farmers need the cars to escape the dust bowl, so they plan to make their money by deceiving unknowing families, and easily manipulated visitors, such as a woman who wants an expensive car and can do her best to push her husband to buy one. They attempt to make the clients feel obliged to obtain a car from them. They say:

What you want is transportation, ain't it? No baloney for you. Sure the upholstery is shot. Seat cushions ain't turning no wheels over.
Close tgether. Like to get in to see that one? Sure, no trouble. I'll pull her out of the Line. Get 'em under obligation. Make 'em take up your time. Don't let 'em forget they're takin' your time. People are nice, mostly. They hate to put you out. Make 'em put you out, an' then sock it to 'em (Steinbeck 41-42)

Steinbeck uses repetition, the repeated occurrence of words or phrases that function to deliver an idea or a concept. The repetition of the car salesman's spiel which is full of catchphrases and sales slogans “*Used Cars, Good Used Cars Cheap transportation*” (41), allows him to take complete control of the situation and, with the speed and confidence of his words; the salesman is able to manipulate the stricken farmers to make profits. Throughout the chapter, the used car dealership owner repeats important detail such as the names of cars, like '27 Ford, '26 Buick, '25 Dodge, Model T, etc “*then you can work 'em down to that '26 Buick. 'F you start on the Buick, they'll go for a Ford. Roll up your sleeves an' get to work. This ain't gonna last forever. Show 'em that Nash while I get the slow leak pumped up on that '25 Dodge. I'll give you a Hymie when I'm ready*” (41).

⁷ 1930s slang for Poor quality, broken-down cars that transported people from Dust Bowl states to the west.

The prices “*We got to move that lemon for thirty-five dollars*” (Steinbeck 42). “*Can't pay a nickel over seventy-five, or there won't be enough to get to California*” (43). This literary device draws attention to the fact that this was an oft-repeated scenario. The salesman's is not just selling one car to one person. Rather, it's a revolving door. He sells beat up cars in hope that it will break down soon on their way, so that the customer will come back to buy another one.

Steinbeck devotes an entire chapter to a topic unrelated to the Joad family in order to depict the underhanded, dubious, and exploitative practices of Depression era using car salesmen.

By the running of the course of events, the bad economy severely affects families and wallets of all people. The displaced farmers including the Joads need money for their trip out west, so they decide to pack up what belongings they can and attempt to sell their extra possessions before leaving. Steinbeck writes:

The tenant people sifted their belongings and the belongings of their fathers and of their grandfathers. Picked over their possessions for the journey to the west. The men were ruthless because the past had been spoiled, but the women knew how the past would cry to them in the coming days (58).

The tenants begin sorting their farming equipment, tools and instruments that they cannot take with them in order to sell them to provide money to pay for gas and food on their journey out to California. These items include plows, harnesses, and carts. These are not simple items; these mean everything to the Oklahoman farmers, these tools define them. The farming families have grown attached to these possessions through years of hard work “*That plow, that harrow, remember in the war we planted mustard? Remember a fella wanted us to put in that rubber bush they call guayule?*” (58). However, the buyers are just like the sellers of cars, took advantage of this to pay as little as possible. The opportunistic buyers offer

unfairly low prices for the farmers' belongings "*Fifty cents isn't enough to get for a good plow. That seeder cost thirty-eight dollars. Two dollars isn't enough. Can't haul it all back—Well, take it, and a bitterness with it.*" (Steinbeck 58). They do not realize that they are acquiring not only "things" but also the tenants' past: their toils, their passions and their bitterness. The tenant farmers begin to see the buyers not as buyers of junk, but of junked lives; "*You're not buying only junk, you're buying junked lives. And more—you'll see—you're buying bitterness*" (58).

The desperate situation of Oklahoman families at that time pushes one of the tenants not only to sell his farming equipment, but also he decides to sell two of his horses and wagons to the junk dealers, since it is no longer the mules time, it is the machine age. However, the opportunistic buyers offer him a very low price "*How much? Ten dollars? For both? And the wagon—Oh, Jesus Christ! I'd shoot 'em for dog feed first*" (58). This quote shows that the tenant does not want to sell both of the horses for ten dollars only, and he would rather shoot them to feed the dog. But, what else can he do? He has no power in this negotiation, again the buyers have a complete control and he knows it. He can keep the horses for himself, but they will likely end up dead on his way to California. Selling them allows him to have a few dollars in his pocket, though he has lost more but, still better than nothing. The man tells the buyer that he is buying "*buying years of work, toil in the sun; you're buying a sorrow that can't talk*" (58).

The Joad family was one of these families who have been humiliated for being obliged to sell at unreasonable prices. The omniscient narrator explains:

And the tenant men came walking back, hands in their pockets, hats pulled down. Some bought a pint and drank it fast to make the impact hard and stunning. But they didn't laugh and they didn't dance. They didn't sing or pick the guitars. They walked back to the farms, hands in pockets and heads down, shoes kicking the red dust up (58-59).

This particular action occupies few lines only in the chapter, but it emphasizes the harm that used cars salesmen, buyers and technological progress in general have done to the lives of the tenant farmers, who have burned all what was not sold or packed up, and finally became ready to leave.

3.2.5. The Grandparents Death and the Bill

People even in their lovers funerals has to pay an amount of money for the government, poor people or better to say the majority cannot afford a funeral funding, The law requires deaths to be reported and to pay 40 dollars, the struggle of the poor is emotionally portrayed in the chapter thirteen when the Joads do not have the money to have an appropriate funeral for their Grampa.

Shortly after entering the road 66 on the way to California, and when the Joads meet the Wilsons and Grampa at that time was ill, and decides to take a rest in the Wilsons tent, where he had a stroke and died. The Joads are sad but also confused, because now they have to pay a bill to do a funeral for Grampa, *“We go in like the law says an' they'll come out for him. We on'y got a hundred an' fifty dollars. They take forty to bury Grampa an' we won't get to California—or else they'll bury him a pauper”* (Steinbeck 93). So the Joads bury the dead body by themselves and write a note explaining the cause of the death in case the body was found.

Not long after they crossed the California state line, the Joads stopped at a checkpoint by the agriculture inspectors. Ma Joad begs the officer to let them pass, and shows him how sick Grandma is; Grandma was already dead by that point. Even though the heading back East warned the Joads that there aren't any decent jobs there, the Joads held on hope so much that Ma rode with a dead body next to her in the truck, the family decide to spent \$40, most of the rest of their money, for a coroner to take care of Grandma, since they will get

jobs soon. *"Tom said, "I guess we got to go to the coroner, wherever he is. We got to get her buried decent. How much money might be lef', Pa?"*

"'Bout forty dollars," said Pa." (156).

3.2.6. The Second Industrial Revolution

The second industrial revolution affected the structure of American life in the 19th C, machines and new technologies were introduced to the country, since this industrial revolution, people were replaced simply by machines which led to the rise of joblessness and poverty. The plight of the farmers is strongly tied with the industrialization, especially in the form of a tractor, when the drought makes crops cultivation difficult, farmers are being kicked out from their lands and replaced by a tractor driven by a man who does not care about the land and do not know how to deal with it. A tractor has the ability to replace multiple families because it is faster, the farmers adore and love their lands in contrast to the machinery which is cold. When a tenant approaches the tractor driver, he questions, *"Well, what you doing this kind of work for-- against your own people?"* (Steinbeck 37). Here the conflict of man and machine is introduced properly, a large number of people migrate from farms to major cities to fill the demands of the new economy.

The industrial economy change badly the sharecropper's lives separating them from their beloved land, where their families lived for generations; like grampa who does not want to leave his home, *"said Grampa.»You go right on along. Me—I'm stayin'. I give her a goin'-over all night mos'ly. This here's my country. I b'long here. An' I don't give a goddamn if they's oranges an' grapes crowdin' a fella outa bed even. I ain't a-goin'. This country ain't no good, but it's my country. No, you all go ahead. I'll jus' stay right here where I b'long."* (57).

The use of new modern machines brings bad luck to the farmers lives, Steinbeck claims that the tractor is a destructive force of machinery; this new machine puts manual laborers out of work, which results in uneasy relationship between men and tractor, like they are racing each other.

3.2.7. The Effects of the Capitalist System

Capitalism is an economic and political system in which the industry is controlled by private owners or private market rather than the state, this system has different definitions, so according to Foldvary:

“Capitalism” means the sector of an economy in which markets determine prices and quantities. In a “capitalist” system, both the market for goods and the market for inputs are based on voluntary action within the constraints of governmental interventions, namely taxes, subsidies, restrictions, and mandates (Foldvary).

Steinbeck shows his clear opinion about the capitalist system, and what people living under capitalism rules must do to survive. The writer clearly describes his unfavorable judgment of capitalist economy in his book. He criticizes capitalism within the first chapters, by referring to the bank as a ‘monster’, *“The bank is something more than men, I tell you. It's the monster. Men made it, but they can't control it”* (Steinbeck 23). The writer reveals the cruelty of the bank and how people who are controlled by capitalism are greedy for money and do not care at all about the farmers who lost their land such as the owners of the banks and the landlords, and that capitalism is an inhuman system, and gives it a negative light.

Common people are portrayed as victims of capitalism, like the Joad family and other families who are forced off their lands. Because it is impossible for them to grow crops so they could not pay what they owe to the bank for the land nor the landlords what they owe

for the house, Steinbeck criticizes this cycle of capitalism which led to numerous bad consequences such as destroying farmers lives and leading them to homelessness and boundless poverty:

And as cannery owner he paid himself a low price for the fruit and kept the price of canned goods up and took his profit. And the little farmers who owned no canneries lost their farms, and they were taken by the great owners, the banks, and the companies who also owned the canneries. As time went on, there were fewer farms (Steinbeck139).

Steinbeck in his novel shows how capitalism can be harmful and could ruin people's lives, he goes heavy judging its results and effects, through the novel a reader can notice his hate for this economic system, showing how the landowners and rich people took advantage of the small farmers:

And the great owners, who must lose their land in an upheaval, the great owners with access to history, with eyes to read history and to know the great fact: when property accumulates in too few hands it is taken away. And that companion fact: when a majority of the people are hungry and cold they will take by force what they need. And the little screaming fact that sounds through all history: repression works only to strengthen and knit the repressed. The great owners ignored the three cries of history. The land fell into fewer hands, the number of the dispossessed increased, and every effort of the great owners was directed at repression. The money was spent for arms, for gas to protect the great holdings, and spies were sent to catch the murmuring of revolt so that it might be stamped out. The changing economy was ignored, plans for the change ignored; and only means to destroy revolt were considered, while the causes of revolt went on (Steinbeck 161-162).

The writer paints the harsher facets of the capitalist society and the extreme hurt caused by it. Through reading the novel, his opinion is obvious and clear, the attacking on capitalism and bourgeoisie and the repetition of the word monster many times, referring to the bank, to draw the idea of the oppressor and oppressed, were the reasons of calling Steinbeck as a Communist.

3.2.8. Socialism in the Weedpatch Camp

There are different definitions for Socialism, as Martin defines it in his journal article, after mentioning many Professors own definitions, he concludes:

It is the Public ownership of nearly all the means of production, and the Operation of these means of production by public officials (Martin).

The image of Socialism in *The Grapes of Wrath* is vivid in the Weedpatch camp, it is the best example of socialism, the camp is governed by a leader who is elected by the community, if he is not effective, he will be changed. This camp has clean bathrooms and showers, the Joads loved it, people are nice to each other and very organized, they follow the rules of the camp, where no one sleep hungry, even if a person could not afford food he will get it for credit. The camp is surrounded by a fence and no one can get in without a warrant, that is why people feel safe and secure. Here the camp represents how can human govern themselves without any fear, and manage their own lives, according to their rules, despite the hardship of the migrants they could enjoy and have dancing nights and group forms of entertainment of these people who have been thrown together by circumstances in the camp:

Tom stopped the car. "Right there?"

"Yeah. Now you let the others unload while I sign you up. Get to sleep. The camp committee'll call on you in the morning and get you fixed up."

Tom's eyes drew down. "Cops?" he asked.

The watchman laughed. "No cops. We got our own cops. Folks here elect their own cops. Come along."

"Tom said, "Say—what is this? What committee is this, anyways?"

The watchman settled himself back. "Works pretty nice. There's five sanitary units. Each one elects a Central Committee man. Now that committee makes the laws. What they say goes" (Steinbeck 195).

3.2.9. Labor Issue and Low Wages

One of the central issues expressed by John Steinbeck in his novel during the Depression time is labor issue. Oklahoman farmers suffered from this issue since the very beginning of novel and lasted until the end of it. Steinbeck shows the importance of the work for the Oklahoman farmers who decide to leave their land looking for it in California.

When the Joads are finally in California, the first thing they ask about is whether there are an available job in picking fruits as promised in the handbills, ignoring their miserable situation, poverty and starvation. In the hope of better life conditions and earning their living through the strenuous work in the plantations, and it was the case off all the other migrant farmers as one of them declares to Tom *"Lookin' for work?" he said. "So you're lookin' for work. What ya think ever'body else is lookin' for? Di'monds? What you think I wore my ass down to a nub lookin' for?"* (Steinbeck 165).

In chapter twenty, Steinbeck-again points the oppressive economic system in bleak colors because he wants to describe the inhumanity and the injustice of the land owners of California who used the handbills as a trick to get thousands of migrant workers, so they can offer them very low wages, and the poor migrant farmers have no other choice than to take what is offered to feed their starving children. Back to the novel, Tom says:

"Back home some fellas come through with han'bills—orange ones. Says they need lots a people out here to work the crops."

The young man laughed. "They say they's three hundred thousan' us folks here, an' I bet ever' dam' fam'ly seen them han'bills."

"Yeah, but if they don' need folks, what'd they go to the trouble puttin' them things out for?"

"Use your head, why don'cha?"

"Yeah, but I wanta know."

"Look," the young man said. "S'pose you got a job a work, an' there's jus' one fella wants the job. You got to pay 'im what he asts. But s'pose they's a hundred men." He put down his tool. His eyes hardened and his voice sharpened. "S'pose they's a hundred men wants that job. S'pose them men got kids, an' them kids is hungry. S'pose a lousy dime'll buy a box a mush for them kids. S'pose a nickel'll buy at leas' some pin for them kids. An' you got a hunderd men. Jus' offer 'em a

nickel—why, they'll kill each other fightin' for that nickel. Know what they was payin' las' job I had? Fifteen cents an hour. Ten hours for a dollar an' a half, an' ya can't stay on the place. Got to burn gasoline gettin' there." He was panting with anger, and his eyes blazed with hate. "That's why them han'bills was out. You can print a hell of a lot of han'bills with what ya save payin' fifteen cents an hour for fiel' work" (166).

Tom cannot believe what he hears, since he finds that Hooverville actually has got a lot of growing orchards and many trees of grapes and vegetables. Therefore- he insists, that the landowners really need men to do the picking job, however the man answers him again:

"I'll tell ya," he said quietly. "They's a bigson-of-a-bitch of a peach orchard I worked in. Takes nine men all the year roun'." He paused impressively. "Takes three thousan' men for two weeks when them peaches is ripe. Got to have 'em or them peaches'll rot. So what do they do? They send out han'bills all over hell. They need three thousan', an' they get six thousan'. They get them men for what they wanta pay. If ya don't wanta take what they pay, goddamn it, they's a thousan' men waitin' for your job. So ya pick, an' ya pick, an' then she's done. Whole part a the country's peaches. All ripe together. When ya get 'em picked, ever'goddamn one is picked. There ain't another damn thing in that part a the country to do. An' them owners don' want you there no more. Three thousan' of you. The work's done. You might steal, you might get drunk, you might jus' raise hell. An' besides, you don' look nice, livin' in ol' tents; an' it's a pretty country, but you stink it up. They don't want you aroun'. So they kick you out, they move you along. That's how it is" (Steinbeck 166-167).

Through the novel *The Grapes of Wrath*, John Steinbeck criticizes the economic system that indicates that there is no equality between production and price, and no equality between the hard working and efforts of the workers and the wage rate. In the ordinary cases, the theory of demand-supply states that the price would fall, if there is too many products. However, this is not the case with the economic system in California, where the more migrant farmers come to work, the more expensive the price gets. Therefore, the low wages they get are burdened into the high prices. Through Floyd (one of the migrant workers), Steinbeck writes:

"I been here six months," he said. "I been scrabblin' over this here State tryin' to work hard enough and move fast enough to get meat an' potatoes for me an' my wife an' my kids. I've run myself like a jackrabbitan—I can't quite make her.

There just ain't quite enough to eat no matter what I do. I'm gettin' tired, that's all. I'm gettin' tired way past where sleep rests me. An' I jus' don't know what to do" (174).

It is interesting to notice that Steinbeck has a specific focus on of the working value. For him, a worker must get paid according to the efforts that he makes and the value of his work. However, the rich landowners forget this right. Furthermore, they consider migrant farmers like machines. In other words, the salary they paid permits them only to preserve their strength in order to be able to keep on working.

Throughout the chapter twenty-one, the clash of the social classes sharpens when the landowners of California use the migrants as cheap source of labor and as an available means to increase their own profit. Because the sole survivor from this unfair situation is the landowners; they even gain more profits out of it and grow rich, this was the result of their position that allow them control the wage rate and keep the surplus crops. This tendency toward Marxism is shown from the following:

And the migrants streamed in on the highways and their hunger was in their eyes, and their need was in their eyes. They had no argument, no system, nothing but their numbers and their needs. When there was work for a man, ten men fought for it—fought with a low wage. If that fella'll work for thirty cents, I'll work for twenty-five. If he'll take twenty-five, I'll do it for twenty. No, me, I'm hungry. I'll work for fifteen. I'll work for food. The kids. You ought to see them. Little boils, like, comin' out, an' they can't run aroun'. Give 'em some wind fall fruit, an' they bloated up. Me, I'll work for a little piece of meat. And this was good, for wages went down and prices stayed up. The great owners were glad and they sent out more handbills to bring more people in. And wages went down and prices stayed up. And pretty soon now we'll have serfs again. And now the great owners and the companies invented a new method. A great owner bought a cannery. And when the peaches and the pears were ripe he cut the price of fruit below the cost of raising it. And as cannery owner he paid himself a low price for the fruit and kept the price of canned goods up and took his profit. And the little farmers who owned no canneries lost their farms, and they were taken by the great owners, the banks, and the companies who also owned the canneries (Steinbeck 193).

The Joads are fed up from this situation, and decide to leave the campgrounds of Hooverville, which brings about a feeling of frustration and hatred, and to move south looking for the government camp dreaming of better existence.

The Joad family arrives at the government camp, which is known as Weedpatch, they enjoy life in this camp, which the migrants run successfully, but only Tom finds a little work with Timothy and Wilkie Wallace at Mr. Thomas who brings some bad news for them. He declares:

"I've got some things to tell you. I been paying you thirty cents an hour—that right?"

"Why, sure, Mr. Thomas—but—"

"And I been getting thirty cents' worth of work." His heavy hard hands clasped each other.

"We try to give a good day of work."

"Well, goddamn it, this morning you're getting twenty-five cents an hour, and you take it or leave it." The redness of his face deepened with anger.

Timothy said, "We've give you good work. You said so yourself "(Steinbeck 200-201).

Again, the wages are getting lower and lower as the number of workers grows higher, while the prices stay up. The owner for whom they are working tries to explain that he is not the one that should be blamed, he just gets orders from The Farmers Association, which is run by the Bank of the West, Mr. Thomas says:

"Look," he said. "I got sixty-five acres here. Did you ever hear of the Farmers' Association?"

"Why, sure."

"Well, I belong to it. We had a meeting last night. Now, do you know who runs the Farmers Association? I'll tell you. The Bank of the West. That bank owns most of this valley, and it's got paper on everything it don't own. So last night the member from the bank told me, he said, 'You're paying thirty cents an hour. You'd better cut it down to twenty-five.' I said, 'I've got good men. They're worth thirty.' And he says, 'It isn't that,' he says. 'The wage is twenty-five now. If you pay thirty, it'll only cause unrest' (201).

Steinbeck draws attention to the irony of the existence of what is called “the Farmers’ Association” that is despite the fact that their members name themselves like a collective, they “at the same time” mean to short change farmers and absolutely aim to break their unity and existence.

3.3. Politics in *the Grapes of Wrath*

Through the novel, the plight of the poor farmers is related to many reasons and consequences, economic, social and political ones. The reader may not pay attention to the political side of the novel in his first attempt of reading, but *The Grapes of Wrath* is a story with plenty of hidden messages and critics of the period.

3.3.2. The Abuse of Power

The government in *The Grapes of wrath* is depicted as a helpless power which does not care about the poor farmers and the families at any point, it is noticeable how the government, and political figures abuse their powers to maintain such a lack of balance of power between the workers and businessmen, The businessmen take advantages of the workers whenever they had the opportunity.

“If a bank or finance company owned the land, the owner man said, The Bank – or the Company – needs – wants – insists – must have – as though the Bank or the Company were a monster, with thought and feeling, which had ensnared them. These last would take no responsibility for the banks or the companies because they were men and slaves, while the banks were machines and masters all at the same time” (21).

Neither the owners nor the bourgeoisie class care about the struggle of the framers, if a farmer asks about his right he will get in trouble, although he done nothing harmful, as it is described in the novel:

The man said, "You men want to work?" Still they looked quietly, suspiciously. And men from all over the camp moved near. One of the squatting men spoke at last. "Sure we wanta work. Where's at's work?" "Tulare County. Fruit's opening up. Need a lot of pickers." Floyd spoke up. "You doin' the hiring?" "Well, I'm contracting the land." The men were in a compact group now. An overalled man took off his black hat and combed back his long black hair with his fingers. "What you payin'?" he asked. "Well, can't tell exactly, yet. 'Bout thirty cents, I guess." "Why can't you tell? You took the contract, didn't you?" "That's true," the khaki man said. "But it's keyed to the price. Might be a little more, might be a little less." Floyd stepped out ahead. He said quietly, "I'll go, mister. You're a contractor, an' you got a license. You jus' show your license, an' then you give us an order to go to work, an' where, an' when, an' how much we'll get, an' you sign that, an' we'll all go." The contractor turned, scowling. "You telling me how to run my own business?" Floyd said, "'F we're workin' for you, it's our business too." "Well, you ain't telling me what to do. I told you I need men." (Steinbeck 179).

Yet Steinbeck does not suggest that the government should provide jobs for people, but he criticizes the way it deals with the farmers and migrants. When Grampa dies the image in the chapter thirteen shows that the government cares more about dead people than those who are still alive, 40\$ to burry a dead body, people could not have a proper funeral for their cousins and lovers.

The government as always is against any kind of disobedience, that is why farmers are not able to stand up and protest, they cannot ask for their rights, anyone who would dare to raise his voice, will be taken to jail:

Tom said angrily, "Them peaches got to be picked right now, don't they? Jus' when they're ripe?" "'Course they do."

"Well, s'pose them people got together an' says, 'Let em rot.' Wouldn' be long 'fore the price went up, by God!"

The young man looked up from the valves, looked sardonically at om."Well, you figgered out somepin, didn' you. Come right outa your own head."

"I'm tar'd," said Tom. "Drove all night. I don't wanta start no argument. An' I'm so goddamn tar'd I'd argue easy. Don't be smart with me. I'm askin' you."

The young man grinned. "I didn' mean it. You ain't been here. Folks figgered that out. An' the folks with the peach orchard figgered her out too. Look, if the folks gets together, they's a leader—got to be—fella that does the talkin'. Well, first time this fella opens his mouth they grab 'im an' stick 'im in jail. An' if they's another leader pops up, why, they stick *'im* in jail (Steinbeck 167).

In the previous quote, Steinbeck shows his standing point about the government and its rules, the writer is desperately asking for a better treatment and better solutions, and that a government employee or an officer should not act against people who are already suffering, Steinbeck gives us many examples of such oppression. In the chapter twenty, when “Floyd” a migrant, who asks about the contract, price, and the details of the work, in return the deputy sheriff wants to arrest him on a bogus charge, the man runs away, after that the sheriff says that the whole camp will be burned. Steinbeck objects that the police force is functioning improperly by working against some people rather than with all people. When a man claims that the wages are very low, he gets mistreated. Farmers cannot gather themselves and create any kind of association in order to demand their rights, because they will be arrested and beaten by the police who are ready to take anyone to jail if they suspected him. The government is seen as nothing more than a police force.

3.3.3. Mass Migration to California

The writer also reveals an explicit political message in the chapter fourteen about the mass migration to the West. The States are terrified as change begins and the controlling powers are afraid that this change will threaten their interests, they try to blame the new taxes or the growing labor movement, neglecting the fact that their bossiness interests are the cause

of such changes, by obliging the farmers to leave their lands, and growing hunger not only in one stomach but in millions. He outlines that the effects of mass migration on the powerful entities may be dangerous, and it is hard to push around a group of families that have been united together.

THE WESTERN LAND, nervous under the beginning change. The Western States, nervous as horses before a thunder storm. The great owners, nervous, sensing a change, knowing nothing of the nature of the change. The great owners, striking at the immediate thing, the widening government, the growing labor unity; striking at new taxes, at plans; not knowing these things are results, not causes. Results, not causes; results, not causes.(Steinbeck100)

3.3.4. Hoover Policy Vs Roosevelt Policy

Hooverville is the known name for the shanty towns, which are built during the Great Depression, those camps are named after the president of the US Herbert Clark Hoover, who is blamed by the Americans for allowing the country to sink deeply into the Depression and for the lack of government help. Those camps are ruled by the “I” policy, in which everyone cares about himself and searches for his own interest. The policy of the camp represents Hoover’s policy during his rule; he urged self-reliance and the notion that people should not count on the government to help them, as being explained in the first chapter.

The Joads leave their homeland, looking for jobs, on their trip they settle in the Hooverville camp, a dirty camp full with hungry people most of them couldn’t find any jobs, it is an unorganized and unsuccessful, people are selfish, no one helps the other, everyone do whatever he want, there is no sense of unity, the camp has no sanitary facilities, since it is not an official campsite. Children are starving, the camp is full with negativity, it is unsecure and can be burned at any time by police officers or citizens, cops are rude and abuse their power. The Joad feel uncomfortable and dislike the camp. As it is described in the chapter twenty :

There was no order in the camp; little gray tents, shacks, cars were scattered about at random. The first house was nondescript. The south wall was made of three sheets of rusty corrugated iron, the east wall a square of moldy carpet tacked between two boards, the north wall a strip of roofing paper and a strip of tattered canvas, and the west wall six pieces of gunny sacking. Over the square frame, on untrimmed willow limbs, grass had been piled, not thatched, but heaped up in a low mound. The entrance, on the gunnysack side, was cluttered with equipment. A five-gallon kerosene can served for a stove. It was laid on its side, with a section of rusty stovepipe thrust in one end. A wash boiler rested on its side against the wall; and a collection of boxes lay about, boxes to sit on, to eat on. A Model T Ford sedan and a two-wheel trailer were parked beside the shack, and about the camp there hung a slovenly despair (Steinbeck 163).

In the other hand, the Weedpatch camp is created by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and it is a part of the president Roosevelt's New Deal . this camp is ruled by the "We" policy, it represents Roosevelt's ideas and philosophies, who showed a special care to the working class and passed many programs to eliminate hunger and joblessness, he was a democrat who used the government funds to help the public. The writer in his novel shows the huge difference between both camps and how each camp's rules shape people's lives, his favorable opinion to the Weedpatch camp is clear. It is obvious that Steinbeck supports democracy, and its reflection on people's attitudes. People who make their own rules in the Weedpatch camp, life become much easier and happier for them, they do not feel oppressed or tyrannized. In contrast, they feel free without an oppressive government mistreating them and feel responsible in the same time, everyone has made his own special touch to assist the society to make it as close as possible to perfection.

The Joads get along with the community very well; the inhabitants feel the safety of being united with those who are going through the same mental and physical journey. The camp is well organized and neat, the migrants govern themselves, there is a committee leaders who run the camp, also this camp has clean bathrooms and showers, it is surrounded by a fence and no one can get in without a warrant even the police, the committee makes sure to stay away from the abuse of the police, and secure the camp by their own, people share

food and care about each other. If a person cannot find a job in the farms, he will get a work in the camp. "Mrs. Joyce said timidly, "S'pose we can't never pay? We ain't had work for a long time." "You'll pay if you can. If you can't, that ain't none of our business, an' it ain't your business. One fella went away, an' two months later he sent back the money. You ain't got the right to let your girl sit hungry in this here camp."(Steinbeck 216).

3.3.5. The Farmers and the Discrimination Hardship

The Grapes of Wrath also represents different kinds of discrimination back then; the immigrant workers who come before the migrant farmers' arrival are being disrespected as we can see in chapter nineteen:

Now farming became industry, and the owners followed Rome, although they did not know it. They imported slaves, although they did not call them slaves: Chinese, Japanese, Mexicans, Filipinos. They live on rice and beans, the business men said. They don't need much. They wouldn't know what to do with good wages. Why, look how they live. Why, look what they eat. And if they get funny—deport them (Steinbeck 157).

Although the migrants who come from the South are Americans, but they are not welcomed at all, they are called 'Okies', and people treat them as they are criminals, also they are paid low wages. The migrants are extremely hated by the Californians, they are seen as a threat and danger. The government helps to get rid of the migrants, in 1937, to stop this mass migration, California passed a law "Anti Okies law", that criminalized any bringing of any indigent non-resident, it is considered as a crime (Nixon). The writer describes the situation:

Okies—the owners hated them because the owners knew they were soft and the Okies strong, that they were fed and the Okies hungry; and perhaps the owners

had heard from their grandfathers how easy it is to steal land from a soft man if you are fierce and hungry and armed. The owners hated them. And in the towns, the storekeepers hated them because they had no money to spend. There is no shorter path to a storekeeper's contempt, and all his admirations are exactly opposite. The town men, little bankers, hated Okies because there was nothing to gain from them. They had nothing. And the laboring people hated Okies because a hungry man must work, and if he must work, if he has to work, the wage payer automatically gives him less for his work; and then no one can get more (Steinbeck 158).

3.3.6. Child Labor

Steinbeck makes of his novel *The Grapes of Wrath* as a mean to depict one of the major issues in the Depression era, which is Child labor. Steinbeck shows that the government does not prevent children from working until 1938 when it finally passes The Fair Labor Standards Act, which was the first successful federal law to regulate child labor. Children are everywhere in *The Grapes of Wrath*, however, they do not all share equal rights. While the landowners' children enjoy their rights to play and study, the poor migrant Children are in the fields working with their parents in bad conditions to help support their families. Pa says: "*We're doin' fine. We made three and a half today. Wisht she'd keep up. Them kids is gettin' to be good pickers*" (282).

Migrant children in *The Grapes of Wrath* live through the same circumstances of the adults who suffer from hunger and homelessness, struggling for survival and dreaming of a better life.

3.4. Conclusion

Towards the conclusion of *The Grapes of wrath*. The novel describes the difficulties that faced the migrant labors during the era of the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl. As can be seen after analyzing it, the writer narrates the story in a rich description of the economic, social and political aspects of the society at that period, such as migration, poverty, starvation, joblessness and low wages. His fierce denunciation of the maltreatment has made his novel worthy of reading. The bulk of his creative work realistically depict agonies endured by the urban fringe groups, the little class people and their ineluctable struggle.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

The Roaring Twenties, was an era of dramatic changes in the United States, it was characterized by an economic growth that led to a huge widespread of business and high salaries. The nation's total wealth more than doubled between 1920 and 1929.

The history of the United States took another path since October the 24th, 1929, when the Stock Market Crash took place, which sent Wall Street to a panic; this economic downturn was seen as the worst one in the history of the industrialized world, lasting from 1929 to 1939. Americans witnessed a remarkable change in economy and politics. those changes were reflected on society, most of people could not find jobs, homes or food, thousands were obliged to leave their lands and to migrate, this era was characterized by a mass migration, especially when the drought hit the agrarian states of the west so people migrated to California. The governmental banks evicted the farmers from their lands, since they could not grow any crops under such severe drought, and replaced them by machines, as a result farmers had to travel to another place to find jobs and to settle, the destination of the most farmers was California, which was seen as the promised land, those people experienced hardships during their lives.

Literary speaking, Literature that was written at the 1930's was mainly concerned with the struggles of the 'proletariat' and the oppression of capitalism, writers attempted to depict the American society change through their writings. John Steinbeck wrote his famous trilogy during the Great Depression, known as the Dust Bowl trilogy. *The Grapes of Wrath* had been considered as the best one because it could describe perfectly the life of the migrating farmers and their misery during the Great Depression.

This novel traces the migration of an Oklahoma Dust bowl family to California and their hardships as migrant farm workers, despite the fact that the novel was harshly criticized

but it was quickly made into a fabled. The book was highly credited for its highly descriptive quality and made an instant sensation, publicizing the injustices of migrant labors.

The main objective of the research is to show how the economic and political aspects of the Great Depression are portrayed by John Steinbeck.

At the end of this study, we could reach different conclusions .First of all , capitalism produced economical and social oppression during the era of the Great depression, the novel describes how the society under this system suffered, and that common people are the only victims like the Joad family. Second, the effect of the economic downturn on society, Steinbeck personalizes the large-scale economic injustice in the Joads struggle; he focuses mainly on unemployment and low wages. The rate of unemployment rose during the Great Depression, and farmers who could find jobs were paid low wages. Third, the novel also casts different economic philosophies such as: Marxism, socialism and capitalism and their different effects on the society and individuals. Least but not last, the government corruption and the abuse of power during the period, and how it was seen as a helpless power and only as a police force. The writer also depicts oppression, discrimination, and child labor as familiar phenomena during the Great Depression.

Throughout the thorough analysis and intensive reading we come to answer how the economic and political aspects of the Great Depression in America are portrayed in Steinbeck's *The grapes of Wrath*.

Lack of free books and the disability to get a full access to many websites and online journals and magazines, were the main hindrances that faced us through our research process.

The results of this study have implications for potential positive change, since it is a valuable source, it can be useful for both students of civilization and literature, it also can help researchers. Because it provides a clear image about different elements, from a historical background of the Roaring Twenties and the Great Depression, to the Writer and most

specifically to the novel "*The Grapes of Wrath*". This study essentially demonstrates the economic and political aspects of the Great Depression in John Steinbeck's novel. On the light of this research, we shall propose other relevant topic to be tackled in a dissertation, such as The American Dream in *The Grapes of Wrath*.

The Grapes of Wrath is one of the most social, economic and political engaged books of the 20th century but it is also one of the most surprising epics of modern times.

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ملخص

عناقيد الغضب، عمل فني مميز للكاتب **جون ستاينبيك** أثبت تألقه عبر تاريخ الأدب الأمريكي. قصة حقيقية تروي تفاصيل هجرة عائلات أمريكية من أوكلاهوما إلى كاليفورنيا أين أُجبرت على العمل في الزراعة بعد أن تم سلب أراضيها، فعانت من الاضطهاد من طرف الطبقة البرجوازية والحكومة معا. هذا البحث يتطلب استعمال كل من المنهج التحليلي الوصفي و منهج التاريخ الجديد، بما أنه يوضح الظروف الاقتصادية التي عانت منها الطبقة الكادحة الأمريكية خلال فترة الكساد الكبير. كما يبين كيف انعكس النظام السياسي الأمريكي خلال سنوات الكساد العظيم على الوصف في الرواية وحبكتها ورموزها. **عناقيد الغضب** هي بمثابة وسيلة جسدت و بدقة الجانب السياسي و الاقتصادي للكساد العظيم في أمريكا.

الكلمات المفتاحية:

الكساد العظيم، عناقيد الغضب، الجانب السياسي، الجانب الاقتصادي